Proposal for relaxation of norms on biotechnology sector

1452. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Empowered Group of Ministers on biotechnology has cleared a proposal to relax norms for the biotechnology sector in agriculture and health in order to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and greater participation from small investors;

(b) the steps Government are taking to help the biotechnology which is striving to provide affordable biotechnology solutions to the growing food insecurity and health solution; and

(c) the steps his Ministry is taking to increase the turnover of biotechnology from the present US $ 1.5 billion to US $ 2 billion in the next two years?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) There is no separate Empowered Group of Ministers on biotechnology, however an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM) while considering the provisions of setting up of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and the SEZ Act and Rules considered the proposal for relaxations in biotechnology sector and have relaxed provisions in terms of both the land area and built-up area requirement for biotechnology sector to the tune of 10 hectares and 40,000 square metres. This would encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and greater participation of small investors in the areas of biotechnology in general and health and agriculture in particular.

(b) and (c) The Government has taken special measures to promote the Biotechnology industry and to facilitate increase in turnover of biotech sector. Initiatives have been taken to provide and enabling environment for industrial growth such as exemption of biotech sector from compulsory licensing; permitting 100% FDI in the sector; reducing the area of SEZ to bring it at par with IT sector; providing fiscal incentives to in-house R&D recognized industries in terms of exemption of custom duty on capital goods, reduction in import duty and 150% weighted deduction against expenditure incurred on in-house R&D.

Department of Biotechnology is also supporting R&D and technology development, both in the public and private sector, for developing products

and processes which provide affordable biotechnology solutions to the growing food insecurity and health problems.

R and D in agriculture biotechnology is being supported to develop improved crop varieties resistant to abiotic and biotic stress, specially drought. Salt resistant transgenic rice has been developed and is currently under field trial. Biofortification of important staple crops such as rice, wheat and maize, for enhancing micronutrients such as iron and zinc has been initiated. India also participated in the International Rice Genome Programme with ten other countries. Full sequence of rice genome has been completed. It is expected that the decoded rice genome will help in the discovery of gene and DNA markers for development of improved varieties.

In the health sector, research is continuing for developing low cost affordable solutions for public health. A number of vaccines and diagnostics have been developed which are under different stages of trial. Diagnostics for HIV, Japanese Encephalitis have been transferred to industry. Rota virus vaccine is in the advanced stages of trial alongwith the industry. Programmes have also been supported for developing identified drug targets for treatment of communicable/non-communicable diseases.

Interaction of foreign scientists with CSIR

1453. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Harvard and MIT scientists had recently interacted with the scientists of CSIR at a meet co-organized by the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how many scientists from CSIR have been able to translate their research work into successful commercial venture along with the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Indo-US Science and Technology Forum organized a seminar on "Technopreneurship in Academia" during 23-24